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Herb o' Grace

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# Herb o' Grace

Poems in War-Time

By

Katharine Tynan

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*MYRRH AND AMARANTH*



## HERBAL

LOVE-LIES-BLEEDING now is found  
Grown in every common ground.  
Love-lies-bleeding thrives apace  
With the dear forget-me-not :  
Nor is boy's love out of place  
Now in any garden plot.

Love-in-a-mist, bewildered  
With the many tears Love shed,  
Seeks for herb-o'-grace to bind  
Up her wounds, and fever-few  
To give ease to a hurt mind ;  
Wound-wort is not wanting too.

Now the love-lies-bleeding grows  
More than lily or the rose ;  
Love-in-idleness has gone  
Out of fashion ; here are flowers

Heartsease for to rest upon  
With remembrance of sweet hours.

Ladders-to-heaven may be found  
Now in any common ground.



## TELLING THE BEES

*(For Edward Tennant)*

TELL it to the bees, lest they  
Umbrage take and fly away,  
That the dearest boy is dead,  
Who went singing, blithe and dear,  
By the golden hives last year.  
Curly-head, ah, curly-head !

Tell them that the summer's over,  
Over mignonette and clover ;  
Oh, speak low and very low !  
Say that he was blithe and bonny,  
Good as gold and sweet as honey,  
All too late the roses blow !

Say he will not come again,  
Not in any sun or rain,  
Heart's delight, ah, heart's delight !  
Tell them that the boy they knew  
Sleeps out under rain and dew  
In the night, ah, in the night !

## NO MAN'S LAND

NOR to an angel but a friend  
He turned at the day's bitter end.  
It was so comforting to feel  
Some one was near, to see him kneel  
By the deep shell-hole's edge : to know  
He was not left to the fierce foe.

This soldier who had eased his head  
And staunched the flow where it had bled,  
Who made a pillow of his breast  
Where the poor tossing head might rest,  
Wore a young face he used to know  
Yesterday, some time, long ago.

The night's cold it was bitter enough,  
But who shall keep the fierce Day off ?  
And must he lie, be burnt and baked  
In the hot sands, with lips unslaked ?—  
Will no one give him dews and rain ?  
Lord, send the frozen night again !

But here's the one who comforted !  
No angel, but a boy instead,  
Slender and young, above him leans :  
The sands are changed to tender greens ;  
He hears the wind in the sycamore  
Sing a low song by his mother's door.

Such tender touches to his wound,  
Such loving arms to clasp him round,  
Until they find him the third day !  
The stretcher-bearers heard him say,  
"Don't leave me, Denis ! I am here."  
*Denis ?* But Denis died last year !

He will maintain that Denis was  
Beside him in his bitter case,  
Denis more beautiful and gay  
Than in the dear, remembered day :  
God sent no angel, but a friend  
To save him at the bitter end.

## QUIET EYES

THE boys come home, come home from war,  
With quiet eyes for quiet things—  
A child, a lamb, a flower, a star,  
A bird that softly sings.

Young faces war-worn and deep-lined,  
The satin smoothness past recall;  
Yet out of sight is out of mind  
For the worst wrong of all.

As nightmare dreams that pass with sleep,  
The horror and grief intolerable.  
The unremembering young eyes keep  
Their innocence. All is well!

The worldling's eyes are dusty dim,  
The eyes of sin are weary and cold,  
The fighting boy brings home with him  
The unsullied eyes of old.

The war has furrowed the young face.

Oh, there's no all-heal, no wound-wort !

The soul looks from its hidden place

Unharméd, unflawed, unhurt.

## THE SHORT ROAD TO HEAVEN

THERE's a short road to Heaven, but you must take it  
young,  
And if you're for long living the road is all as long ;  
A long road, a hard road, with many a turn and twist.  
The longer you'll be travelling, the easier it's missed.

But the wise lads, the dear lads, they've put it to the  
touch,  
The lads of sweet-and-twenty, and maybe not so much ;  
'Tis the green way they've taken in the spring of their  
year,  
When all their birds are singing to make them pleasant  
cheer.

The long road is dusty and never a streamlet sings,  
The dust lies on the hedgerows and on the birdies' wings ;  
The longer that you travel the wearier you are  
And the farther off is Heaven and the stars are far.

But the wise lads, the dear lads, the pathway's dewy  
green,

For the little Knights of Paradise of eighteen and nine-  
teen ;

They run the road to Heaven, they are singing as they  
go,

And the blood of their sacrifice has washed them white  
as snow.

The young mothers' darlings, ah, who would bid them  
stay ?

The short road to Heaven's a green and pleasant way ;

They run singing and leaping, they will be in before

The night darkens on them—and there's God at the  
door.

## A CONNAUGHT MAN

*(For Hugh Maguire)*

LORD, when he shall come home from war,  
Give him no pastures green,  
But a wet wind and a soft wind  
With reek of turf between.

Nor let Thy light shine overmuch  
Lest that his soul should fret  
For the grey mist and silver mist  
That he will not forget.

Build him no pearl-white palaces  
Nor gardens fair and fine,  
Lest for his bare, far-stretching bogs  
His home-sick heart should pine.

Not groves, nor any vermeil walks,  
Nor flowery pastures pied,  
But the great sweep of sky and land  
And the hills at eventide.



Lord, when the men come from the war,  
Give each man his desire !  
Give him the soft wind and the rain  
And the reek of the turf fire.

## THE BROTHERS

(*For Arnold and Donald Fletcher.*)

ONE called from Salonika and his call  
    Rang to his brother ;  
Forded wide rivers, climbed the mountain wall,  
    Seeking the other.

Are you asleep, Arnold, or do you wake ?  
    Our way's together !  
The day's before us and the path we take  
    Over the heather.

As oft before, breasting the Wicklow hills,  
    Light-foot and leaping  
Over the bog-pools and the singing rills,  
    Side by side keeping.

We have known all the best that life can give,  
    Tasted the sweetest ;  
Shall we grow old, lag heavy-foot and grieve,  
    We, who were fleetest ?

Let us be gone while yet it is the morn  
Dewy before us,  
Light on the mountains and the springing corn  
And the lark o'er us !

The voice from Salonika found the way  
Easy of passage,  
And to French Flanders on the second day  
Carried the message.

Arnold has gone the way that Donald went,  
Donald's o'ertaken ;  
Up to the highest peaks they climb unspent,  
Footing the bracken.

## THE SECRET FOE

WHEN now to battle he shall ride,  
The bravest of the brave,  
Joan the Maid be by his side  
And Michael, quick to save.

Not against man's most fell device  
The shell, the gas, the mine ;  
These he shall meet with steady eyes  
And courage half-divine.

Oh, not the gaping wounds and red  
And not the tortured sense,  
And not the dying and the dead  
And his own impotence.

But when the joy of battle faints  
And his hot blood grows chill,  
Be near him, all ye soldier saints,  
Lest Satan work him ill !

Lest in the hour of his great fight  
This foe should him assail,  
The enemy that creeps by night  
Strike through his coat of mail.

Sebastian of the arrows, haste,  
Michael and the White Maid,  
Lest in his splendid hour, at last,  
The soldier be afraid.

## A SONG OF SPRING

THE Spring comes slowly up this way,  
    Slowly, slowly,  
Under a snood of hoddén grey.

The black and white for her array,  
    Slowly, slowly,  
The Spring comes slowly up this way.

Where is her green that was so gay ?  
    Slowly, slowly,  
The Spring comes slowly up this way.

Unto a world too sick for May,  
    Slowly, slowly,  
The Spring comes slowly up this way.

Where are the lads that used to play ?  
    Slowly, slowly,  
The Spring comes slowly up this way.

She has no heart for holiday,  
    Slowly, slowly,  
The Spring comes slowly up this way.

The trees are out in Heaven they say.  
    Slowly, slowly,  
The Spring comes slowly up our way.

## THE VESTAL

SHE goes unwedded all her days  
Because some man she never knew,  
Her destined mate, has won his bays,  
Passed the low door of darkness through.

Sometimes she has a wild surmise  
Of what dear name he used to have,  
And what the colour of his eyes,  
And was he gay, or was he grave.

Or if his hair was brown or gold,  
Or if his voice was low and clear  
To tell his love with, never told  
To hers or any woman's ear.

His voice is lost upon the wind ;  
And when the rain beats on her heart  
His eyes elude her, warm and kind,  
Where the dim shadows steal apart.



What of their children all unborn ?

What of the house they should have built ?

She wanders through her days forlorn,

The untasted cup of joy is spilt.

She lives unwedded,—as for him

He sleeps too sound for any fret

At their lost kisses, or the dream

Of the poor girl he never met.

## THE OLD HOUSE

THE boys who used to come and go  
In the grey kindly house are flown.  
They have taken the way the young feet know ;  
Not alone, not alone !  
Thronged is the road the young feet go.

Yet in the quiet evening hour  
What comes, oh, lighter than a bird ?  
Touches her cheek, soft as a flower.  
What moved, what stirred ?  
What was the joyous whisper heard ?

What flitted in the corridor  
Like a boy's shape so dear and slight ?  
What was the laughter ran before ?  
Delicate, light,  
Like harps the wind plays out of sight.

The boys who used to go and come

In the grey house are come again;

Of the grey house and firelit room

They are fain, they are fain :

— They are come home from the night and rain.

## WHEN YOU COME HOME

ALL will be right when you come home, dear lad,  
But oh, 'tis long of coming that you are !  
Everything's wrong with all the world and sad ;  
There are so many hurt in this long war,  
So many missing, who will never come,  
Lying out in the rain and in the cold.  
I shall forget it all when you come home,  
I shall forget the lonesome things they told.

There's something, something sad, that troubles me.  
Beats like the rain upon my frightened heart ;  
A tale about a girl, the thing might be,  
Whispered in corners, secret and apart ;  
How he was killed and how she never knew  
Because God put a small cloud on her mind,  
And how she waited the black winters through  
And the wet summers ; surely God was kind !

I took a daisy from the garden-bed  
And plucked the petals, one by one, to tell

When I and my true lover should be wed,  
This year : Next year : Never : the petals fell  
And stopped at Never. But it could not guess,  
The foolish daisy, what true love I had.  
I turned from daisies and I plucked heartsease  
To rest my heart on and be safe and glad.

Everything's wrong, Love, since you went away,  
Such a queer world when all the boys are gone,  
And there is no one left but old and grey,  
Women and children, frightened and alone.  
Sometimes the tale is crying at my heart  
Of that poor girl. Maybe 'twas but a dream.  
When you come home the shadows will depart,  
The lonesome dreams die off in morning gleam.

## THE LAST QUESTION

*(For B. A. Bingham)*

THEY lifted up his weary head,  
    Stained with a dark and bitter dew :  
“How does the battle-go ?” he said.

“Sir, it is victory,”—when he heard  
    He smiled the darkening shadows through  
And died as blithe as a singing bird.

On the stained grass as on a bed  
    Dying he lay and well content—  
“Sir, it is victory,” they said.

So smiling, smiling all the way,  
    To the undying Dead he went  
As to a heavenly holiday.

A HOLY WEEK SONG, 1918

Now when Christ died for man his sake  
A myriad men must die ;  
His Via Crucis they must take  
And share His Calvary.

*God keep ye, gallant gentlemen,  
Let nothing you dismay,  
Who share Lord Jesus Christ His pain  
Upon this Good Friday !*

Now some shall turn and meet His gaze  
And say, " Remember me  
When Thou art come to Thine own place  
Where ransomed sinners be ! "

*God rest ye, gallant gentlemen,  
For ye are bought with price,  
This day there wends a shining train  
The way to Paradise.*

The day our Lord Christ lay in grave  
The dead are piled so high

The field slow-moving like a wave  
Sends up a mortal cry.

*God love ye, gallant gentlemen,  
Let nothing you dismay,  
For life is born and Death is slain  
Upon the Easter Day.*



## FLOWER O' THE YEAR

THE laggard year is now at prime  
And primrose-time is daffodil-time ;  
    Where do the boys delay ? What tether  
    Hinders them from the heavenly weather,  
From violet-time and cowslip-time ?

Why do they keep the house so late ?  
The sweet o' the year is at the gate,  
    And hear the cuckoo calling, saying :  
    Up, slug-a-bed ! 'Tis time for Maying !  
The cuckoo calling early and late.

They have stolen away before the dawn,  
No print in the May-dew on the lawn  
    Betrays the way their light feet taking  
    Set not the quaking grass to shaking,  
Running so light-foot in the dawn.

The primrose and the daffodil weather  
Is here, and cowslips troop together ;  
The lambs frolic in pastures gold,  
But since they come not it is cold.  
Cold the primrose and daffodil weather.

## THE GREAT MAY

Who said the Spring was dead ?  
She would not come again,  
Dust on her starry head,  
For a sad world in pain ?  
The thing they have said in vain,  
She comes new garlanded :  
Lovely on hill and plain  
Her lights, her flowers are shed.

Never was such a May !  
Mercy of God, to prove  
Life springs from the clay  
And every treasured love  
Walks in a heavenly grove.  
The Lord God's holiday  
To the soft coo of the dove  
With the young lambs at play.

Lo ! yours, and yours, are there,  
I see them leap and run

In a May-world past compare  
Whereof our God is sun.  
They rejoice, yea, every one  
In the ambient light and air,  
Their pleasures are not done  
From morn till evening star.

Never was such a Spring!  
Oh, you whose eyes are wet,  
Listen, take comforting,  
Our God does not forget.  
Poor folk that fear and fret  
Your hours are on the wing  
To the loves that wait you yet,  
Raised up and triumphing.

*LOVE-LIES-BLEEDING WITH WOUND-WORT*



## RECOMPENSE

*(For Lord Kilhacken)*

THAT which I saved I lost  
And that I lost I found,  
And you are mine, oh tender little ghost,  
Whose grave is holy ground.

That which I kept is flown,  
So fast the children grow,  
The only child I keep to be my own  
I lost long years ago.

The little ones that stayed  
Slip from me while I cry :  
Oh, not so fast, so fast, you golden-head.  
Swift as the wind they fly.

Not two days are the same.  
To-morrow will not see  
To-day's young children, crested like a flame,  
Gathered about my knee.

One day a day will dawn  
Will see me dispossessed—  
An empty nest whence singing-birds have flown.  
Who shall refill the nest ?

The years run out like sand  
To strip me of my pride ;  
Then in my hand will steal a clinging hand.  
I keep the child who died.

God gives and does not lend  
This one lamb of the fold ;  
And he will need his mother to the end  
And never will grow old.



## A BIRTH-NIGHT SONG

THE Child is rocked on Mary's knee,  
Cold in the stall this bitter night,  
And "*Lullalay-loo*," soft singeth she,  
"My little Boy and Heaven's Delight!"  
When singing stars went up the sky  
The Prince of Peace oped a sweet eye.

His Highness now how small He lies!  
He to be God and Very God!  
A Jacob's ladder spans the skies  
Whereof each rung is angel-trod,  
And all their carols are of Peace,  
Though the sick world hath little ease.

Come in, poor war-worn folk, and rest;  
Kneel where the sinless creatures kneel;  
The Babe snugged warm in Mother's breast,  
He is your Wound-Wort, your All-Heal  
Balsam for hurts that throb and smart,  
Small Rose of Love on Mary's heart.

Shut close within His hand so small

The sick heart's medicine ; not a sword.

Come in, come in, sad people all,

Here is your ancient peace restored !

" *Lullalay-loo*," sings Mary mild,

Kissing her God, her Lamb, her Child.

## THE CROWN

SHE had twelve stars for diadem ;  
She had for footstool the full moon ;  
Her quiet eyes, outshining them,  
Kept memories of the night and noon  
And the still morns at Nazareth  
When in her arms the Child drew breath.

So safe, so warm, He slept by her,  
In her enfolding arms at peace,  
Her milky babe, little and dear ;  
And yet the Tree that should be His  
Grew in the forest, wide and high,  
Whose branches should fill all the sky.

He made twelve stars into her crown  
And set the moon below her feet.  
He was King in Jerusalem Town,  
With twelve spines for His Coronet  
To pierce the brain and blood and bone,  
Were made for Man's Redemption.

Oh, when she answered Gabriel  
With "Be it done!" could she foresee  
The high pangs that she took as well?  
With Bethlehem should be Calvary?  
Or was that moment of high bliss  
Born with sharp pangs, fierce agonies?

Hath she beneath her Crown of Stars  
Remembrance of the thorns wherewith  
Her people crowned her Son? What scars,  
Redder than roses in a wreath,  
Doth she wear in a coronal  
Under the lights that rise and fall?

## A WOMAN COMMENDS HER LITTLE SON

To the aid of my little son  
I call all the magnalities—  
Archangel, Dominion,  
Powers and Principalities.

Mary without a stain,  
Joseph that was her spouse,  
All God's women and men,  
Out of His glorious House.

The Twelve Apostles by him :  
Matthew and Mark and John,  
Luke, the Evangelists nigh him,  
So he fight not alone.

Patrick, Columcille, Bride—  
The Saints of the Irish nation ;  
Keiran, Kevin beside,  
In the death and the desolation.

Listen, ye soldier saints,  
Sebastian, Ignatius, Joan,  
Be by his side ; if he faints,  
Strengthen my little son.

In the Side of Christ I lay him,  
In the Wound that the spear made ;  
In the pierced Hands I stay him,  
So I am not afraid.

On the knees of the Blessed Mary  
And in the fold of her arm,  
Refuge and sanctuary  
Where he shall take no harm.

To the Wound in the Heart of Christ,  
To the Trinity Three in One,  
To the Blood spilled out, unpriced,  
For love of my little son.

## THE YOUNG SOLDIER

SINCE you were so young, child, I shall  
Not fear your noon or even-fall,  
Nor dread you are taken unawares,  
Nor weary Heaven with many prayers.

I shall not wake at night afraid  
Of where your darling head is laid,  
Nor say: "He finds the wind too rough,  
Dear God!" for now the wind's left off.

I shall have ease though lightnings leap,  
Nor hear the thunder in my sleep,  
Nor dread the crying of the seas,  
Nor any mountain precipice.

God pity her who lies awake  
Unquiet for some darling sake!  
Soft sleeps my little son to-night,  
Where many stars make candlelight!

His sword is laid beside his knees ;  
God knows my little son hath ease—  
And I, his mother, may go sleep  
And pray for them who wake and weep.



## THE BOYS OF THE HOUSE

*(For Valentine and Hubert Blake)*

YOUNG martyrs of the war,  
Who with your bright eyes star  
    The shadows grey;  
Who steal at dawn and gloam  
In each beloved room  
    So pale, so gay.

Boys who will not grow old,  
Peach cheek and hair of gold,  
    Smile and are flown;  
You will come back again,  
In the darkness and the rain,  
    In the dusk, in the dawn.

Remember, oh, dear Two,  
Two who came after you  
    Who love, as you loved,  
The grey house and the woods,  
All the sweet solitudes  
    You loved, approved.

Dear martyrs of the war,  
Remember, where you are,  
Boys who have still  
To do, to bear, to attain  
To your glory and your gain—  
By what steep hill ?

## ALIENATION

For the first time since he was born  
Her son, her rose without a thorn,  
They are at variance, they who were  
Always such closest friends and dear.  
Another face is in his dreams  
Under the sunbeams and moonbeams.

In his changed glances she discovers  
Something, some chill between two lovers—  
Something of fear, and oh, it hurts !  
But shall not Love have its deserts  
And win forgiveness, though she still  
Sets her poor will against his will ?

For all day long the battle calls,  
And in the quiet evenfalls,  
And in the night which else is dumb,  
He hears the bugle and the drum.  
And the wild longing in him stirs  
For the fierce battle. He's not hers,

But she her hidden way will keep,  
Striving against him even in sleep,  
Praying against him loud and low,  
"Pity me, so he may not go!"  
Calling on Heaven that it conspire  
Against him and his heart's desire.

*God pity mothers when their sons  
Grow cold, that were their little ones!*

ANY MOTHER

"WHAT's the news ? Now tell it me."

"Allenby again advances."

"No, it is not Allenby

But my boy, straight as a lance is.

"Oh, my boy it is that runs,

Hurls his young and slender body  
On the dread death-dealing guns.

Oh, he's down ! his head is bloody !"

"Haig's offensive has begun."

"Say not Haig's nor any other,  
Since it is my one sweet son

In the gases' risk and smother.

"He is taken by the throat,

In the bursting flame will quiver,  
He the billet for all shot,

He the shell's objective ever."

. . . . .

So not Allenby nor Haig,  
But her darling goes to battle.  
All the world's red mist and vague  
Shattered by the scream and rattle.

Just one slender shape she sees,  
One bright head tossed hither, thither;  
Oh, if he goes down the seas  
Whelm her and the world together!

## PRAYER AT NIGHT

LORD, for the one who dies alone  
This night without companion,  
I cannot rest, I cannot sleep.  
O shepherd of the piteous sheep  
Run with Thy crook, and lift in haste  
The poor head to Thy loving breast.

Oh slake his deadly thirst from streams  
Of Paradise, and give him dreams  
Of the mild weather, the green sward.  
Bind up his bitter wounds, O Lord,  
And give him comfort. Let him know  
His Shepherd 'tis that loves him so.

Thou countest Thy flock : not one is lost  
But Thou goest seeking, for Thou knowest  
The poor things creep away to die  
Where none shall find save Thou art nigh.  
Thou tak'st them to Thy arms, Thy knees,  
And Thy sick lambs have sweetest ease.

Now I shall close my eyes in sleep,  
Nor fret since they are Thine to keep,  
Oh, happy sheep, to have such care,  
The poorest, Love's own prisoner,  
Who comforts as his mother might,  
Rocking him into sleep at night.



## THE VISION

(*Katia: Easter Sunday, 1916*)

SHE had a vision in the dark  
Ere the first lark from nest took flight;  
She saw her own son from fierce strife  
Win to new Life and new Delight.

The clouds were tattered round his head  
As sore bested he fought his foe,  
Where in the conflict he was ta'en  
And slain—she did not see it so.

She saw indeed his bitter case  
In that sad place, parched, without shade,  
And how her Christian Knight must fall  
In Paynim thrall, should Heaven not aid.

But now what light burns in the cloud?  
What voices loud against his ear?  
St. Andrew and St. Patrick ride  
Close by his side; St. George is near.

His banner floats upon the breeze,  
Like a gold fleece it wraps him round—  
So, cap-à-pie from head to knee,  
His enemy he strikes to ground.

He's won the day, he's won the day!  
See the light play upon his brow!  
Brave in his armour and upright  
The Christian Knight is riding now.

She had that vision of her son  
When by the moon asleep she lay—  
And woke to singing birds and dew,  
And knew that it was Easter Day.

## A COLLOQUY

*(For M. W.)*

"WHEN you get to Heaven, seek and find my boy.  
Mother him!" "Until you come?" "I shall  
never come.

Earth was good enough for me who had all my joy  
In my Love, my Light of home.

"But to him be given, in overflowing measure,  
All the joys your Heaven can give if your God be  
just!

He, my boy slain in his youth to serve some mad  
king's pleasure  
And his dreams and hopes in dust."

"How shall I know him where so many boys are?  
Multitudes and multitudes ever they increase."

"Oh, my boy is young and tall, with bird-russet hair  
And quiet eyes of peace.

"He who was killed in a quarrel not his own !

All his days he had good-will to his fellow-men.

Oh, your God is kind and just, shall He not atone

And the dark ways be made plain ?

"Seek my son and find him, so he shall not miss

Me, his mother-comrade, through his length of days."

"Oh, but he would turn from a strange woman's kiss

And ask where his mother delays.

"So be up and going for the way's not long !

God who kissed His Mother dear, a Babe in Naza-  
reth,

Knows how they need mother-love, the dear and  
precious young,

In the new Life where is no Death."

## PALESTINE : 1917

How strange if it should fall to you,  
To me, our boys should do the deed  
The great Crusaders failed to do !  
To win Christ's Sepulchre : to bleed,  
So the immortal dream come true.

What ghosts now throng the Holy Ground,  
With rusted armour, dented sword,  
Listening ? The earth shakes with the sound ;  
The wind brings hither a fierce word :  
*To arms, to arms, Sons of Mahound !*

In many a quiet cloister grey  
Cross-legged Crusaders, men of stone,  
Quiver and stir the Eastward way,  
As they would spring up and be gone  
To the Great Day, to the Great Day.

Godfrey and Lion-Heart and all  
The splendours of the faithful years  
Watch our young sons from the Knights' stall,  
Ready to clap hands to their spears  
If ill befall, if ill befall.

They say : *It is the Child's Crusade*  
*Was talked of in our early Spring.*  
*St. George, St. Denis, to their aid !*  
*That was a boy's voice challenging,*  
*Shrill like a bugle, unafraid !*

Most wonderful, if your son, my son,  
Should win the Holy Thing at last !  
The might of Heathenesse be undone,  
The strong towers down, the gate unfast,  
Lord Christ come to His own, His own.

## PILGRIMS TO THE EAST

THIS Christmas-time my son will come,  
God willing, to the Holy Place  
And by the manger's little room

Will bend his knee and bow his face,  
Eager, with shepherds and with kings,  
For to behold the Holy Things.

The very child I made will see,  
God willing, little Bethlehem,  
The Garden of the Agony,  
Olivet and Jerusalem  
And climb to Calvary's sacred hill—  
Ah, but the world is Calvary still !

My own son's feet the dust shall press,  
God willing, where the Holy Feet  
Passed on His Father's business :  
And some high room above the street  
Shall stir a memory of that Feast  
Where He himself was Eucharist.

Yea, by the Gate called Beautiful

My son, my little son, shall go  
And bathe in Siloam's healing pool.

Yet if God will not have it so  
At least my son, in His high Name,  
Has travelled towards Jerusalem.



## COMFORT

Now she need dread no more to grow  
Too old for him, she need not know  
The bitterness when he who was  
All hers turns to some younger face,  
And she his mother stands aside,  
Bidding her heart be satisfied.

She need not to her own heart say,  
"Fool, to be jealous! Now give way.  
The young are for the young, and all  
The new things are but natural.  
Cast no least shadow on his feast;  
Be glad just to be second best."

She need not to her chill heart tell  
She's loved a different way, but well.  
And like that bird who leans her heart  
Upon a thorn to ease its smart  
Turn to the child who's taken his love  
So that her darling son approve.

Now she's no longer dispossessed—  
For second best's but second best—  
He's hers for all Eternity  
And she his one felicity.  
Her little son, as when he lay  
Small in her arms one heavenly day.

## THE REFRESHMENT

IF I could have foreseen this hour,  
What terror and anguish I had seen!  
And not this time of joy at flower,  
Cool waters and a garden green.

All day the battle in the East  
Thunders. Dear Angels, keep him well!  
His mother sits as to a feast.  
O heart of steel invulnerable!

All night I sleep the young child's sleep  
And waken to the robin's song,  
Blithe as the bird. Dear Angels, keep  
My darling the sharp spears among.

Ah now, I know whose Arms enfold,  
I rest on such a mighty Heart;  
He hides my eyes lest they behold,  
In a most heavenly place apart.

Lord, if this ease be but a lull  
Ere the deep seas are over my head,  
I shall have had, O Beautiful !  
This hour joy-filled and comforted.

## THE PROMISE

To you and you it shall be given,  
As unto Mary her lost Heaven ;  
    Her Son and your son come  
Alive out of the grave and gloom.

Like hers your bliss is pre-ordained  
To see the wounds healed and unstained ;  
    Yea, you shall kiss with her  
Where the sharp blade hath left no scar.

They shall come in warm to your cold  
Dropped arms that found naught to enfold,  
    And on your heart be laid  
The young, the beloved, thorn-crowned head.

Sudden some dawning or some eve  
Your dead son shall come in alive,  
    As once came Mary's Son ;  
The lost, the incredible Heaven be won.



*PANSIES*





## THE DREAM

*(For my Father)*

OVER and over again I dream a dream,  
I am coming home to you in the starlit gloam ;  
Long was the day from you and sweet 'twill seem  
The day is over and I am coming home.

Then I shall find you as in days long past,  
Sitting so quietly in the firelight glow ;  
“Love,” you will say to me, “you are come at last.”  
Your eyes be glad of me as long ago.

All I have won since then will slip my hold,  
Dear love and children, the long years away ;  
I shall come home to you the girl of old,  
Glad to come home to you—oh, glad to stay !

Often and often I am dreaming yet  
Of the firelit window when I've crossed the hill  
And I coming home to you from night and wet :  
Often and often I am dreaming still.

Over and over again I dream my dream.

Ah, why would it haunt me if it wasn't true ?

I am travelling home to you by the last red gleam,

In the quiet evening I am finding you.

## THE MOTHER GIVES UP HER DAUGHTER

THOUGH I must yield her up to you, her lover,  
I have had sweetness more than you can know,  
The little great-eyed maid beyond recover,  
And all her tender worship long ago.

Oh, you are wild for her and little wonder!  
She is so fair, so honest, kind and true.  
But in the lonely house I sit and ponder  
On what was mine and shall not pass to you.

Oh, little darling, how the years went flying,  
And I her moon, her stars, her heart's delight!  
I hardly knew my loss and the dear dying  
Of lovely childhood with the day and night.

Take her—oh, she is sweet beyond all praises!  
You shall not have her childhood sweeter still,  
Gone with the dancing daffodils and daisies,  
Where she was mine upon a heavenly hill.

## THE LITTLE OLD WOMAN

THERE's a Little Old Woman walks in the night,  
Singing her love song like a falling keen;  
The Little Old Woman is the heart's delight,  
With the gold crown under her hood to tell her queen.

The Little Old Woman's coming up this way,  
Playing on her harp-strings a magic air;  
There's this one and that one, they may not stay,  
Stealing out in the night after the player.

The Little Old Woman is at the door,  
Though 'tis a queen she is, in rags she goes,  
Open the door to her, long-awaited for!  
Oh, Love and Delight you are, the Dear Black Rose.

The Little Old Woman she is begging bread;  
She shall never go hungry while the ages pass,  
With the love of her lovers she shall be fed  
And their hearts lie under her feet in the green grass.

They go from the lit board and the fire of peat  
And the dreams and the longing stir in the blood.  
Sweet to be poor with her, yea, death is sweet,  
For the Dear Rose of Beauty in the beggar's hood.

## VIGIL

At night, when all the house is still,  
Wide-waked the chairs and tables come  
And yawn and stretch their limbs until  
The maids appear with pan and broom.

Through the dim hours they creak and groan,  
Their laughter plays with tyrant Man,  
Shaken with stiff derision  
For his pretensions and his span.

Where's then their willing servitude ?  
Meek slaves for their creator's use.  
They make a mock of flesh and blood  
That passes with a morning's dews.

The heart that once leaped in the tree  
Yet lives in the fantastic shapes  
That foolish Man hath made to be—  
But see how wide yon cupboard gapes !

With "Yours" and "Mine" they make great sport,  
Who saw us come and see us go,  
And will be when no least report  
Of us but what a stone can show.

When ghosts and owlets flit abroad,  
The furniture's awake, aware,  
The floor complaining of its load,  
And *what* a creaking of the stair!

## THE GARDEN

I KNOW a garden like a child,  
Clean and new-washed and reconciled.  
It grows its own sweet way, yet still  
Has guidance of some tender will  
That clips, confines, its wilder mood  
And makes it happy, being good.

Around the lordly mountains stand,  
For this is an enchanted land,  
As though their splendours stood to grace  
This little lovely garden place,  
Looking with wise and keeping eyes  
Upon the garden sanctities.

Box borders edge each little bed,  
Paths narrow for a child to tread  
Divide the kitchen garden, dear  
And sweet with musk and lavender,  
And water-mints and beans in bloom.  
Be sure the honey-bee's at home.



How should I tell in a sweet list  
Of beauties, rose and amethyst ;  
The little water-garden cool  
On sultry days, and beautiful  
The wall-garden, the shade, the sun,  
Since they are lovely, every one.

Hot honey of the pines is sweet,  
And when the day's at three o'clock heat  
A winding walk will you invite  
To a new garden out of sight.  
And a green seat is set so near  
The sluggish, stealing backwater.

The Spirit of the garden plays  
At hide-and-seek an hundred ways  
And when you've captured her, she will  
Elude you, calling backward still,  
A silver echo—a sweet child,  
Demure and lovesome, gay and wild.

## WIND

O Wind, I cannot see you pass,  
And yet I feel you as you go  
Around the world and every place,  
Shouting and singing loud and low.

Your breath, your touch, is on my cheeks,  
Such soft caressing finger-tips !  
Can it be you whose anger wrecks  
The high trees and the tallest ships ?

You run so light o'er field and hill,  
You shake no frailest blossom down,  
And yet make havoc when you will  
O'er land and sea, in country and town.

I hear you waking up from sleep  
Over the hills and far away,  
You giant, roaring as you leap  
O'er lambs and daisies at their play.

O Wind, your name makes music sweet !

    You are a lovely thing, O Wind !

And how the world were incomplete

    Without your unseen presence kind.

For now your arms are round my neck,

    And now your buffets are too rough.

And your sharp kisses on my cheek,

    And your fierce clasp and your wild love.

The fool hath said it in his heart

    There are no miracles. O Wing

Confute him when you fly apart

    Close-felt, beloved, invisible Thing.

## MENACE

Oh, when the land is white as milk  
With bloom that lets no leaf between,  
When trees are clad in grass-green silk  
And thrushes sing in a gold screen :  
What is it ails Dark Rosaleen ?

Why is the banshee in the night  
Crying for all the young men gone ?  
Now when the world with bloom is white,  
When the good sun's warm on the stone,  
Why does the Woman of Death make moan ?

As one who is not comforted,  
I heard in every lonely glen  
Dark Rosaleen cry for her dead  
And for her dying race of men.  
Dark Rosaleen, take heart again !

For, oh, there's God in His high place  
And Patrick seated by His side  
To judge with Him the Irish race ;  
And Columcille, Kieran and Bride  
Shall not forget before God's Face.

There's Mary of the Seven Swords,  
Queen of the Gael—oh, many a saint,  
With Oliver Plunkett to look towards  
The Mercy Seat, with praise and plaint,  
For Rosaleen, ever the Lord's.

Oh, weep no more, Dark Rosaleen !  
Menace and terror pass you by.  
Oh, loved beyond the sceptred queen,  
Dark Rosaleen for whom men die !  
And loved till death, Dark Rosaleen.

## WINGS IN THE NIGHT

Now in the soft spring midnight  
    There's rush of wings and whirr,  
Birds flying softly, swiftly ;  
    The night's a-flutter, a-stir.

Home by the bitter seas,  
    They have sped home together.  
So glad to be coming home  
    To the grey hills, the grey weather.

Calling and calling softly  
    One lights by the window-pane :  
The rook, weary with building,  
    Turns to his sleep again.

Ere ever the moor-hens wake  
    And the wild duck come in,  
The birds are about the house  
    With a long call and thin,

They have wakened the wood-pigeon  
To make her plaintive moan,  
The wood-pigeon lamenting  
For sorrows not her own.

Oh, they are never birds,  
But souls of men on the wind,  
Seeking the mother's breast,  
The heart that is soft and kind.

Souls of the Irish dead,  
Flown from the fields of slaughter,  
Home to the mother's arms  
Over the wild grey water.

## THE REFUGE

I WILL lift mine eyes to the mountains,  
To the mountains whence cometh my aid ;  
I shall drink of the Mercy's crystal fountains,  
And shall not be afraid.

St. Patrick and St. Bride be with me,  
And all the saints of the Gael ;  
The wings of Heaven above and beneath me,  
The dead of Inisfail.

The caves of the mountains shall receive me,  
I shall lie as at a mother's breast ;  
The white food the King of Heaven shall give me,  
And the wine of Heaven for feast.

Where the eagle screams over Nephin,  
Where the Reek of Patrick looks on the isles,  
From the voices of the world that fret and deafen,  
From the evil in her smiles,



I shall creep, and the mountains will hold me,  
As a lamb that runs with the ewe,  
The warmth of the mother shall enfold me,  
I shall have milk and dew.

## EVENING

*(In Connaught)*

GOLD from the edges of the horizon flowing,  
A great and golden sea :  
The light's spilled out of heaven and flowing, growing  
A gold immensity.

The sea-bird now has gotten a golden feather,  
Gold are the Hundred Isles,  
Gold the white cabin like a cloud at tether  
Where the long evening smiles.

The water-bird floats on the golden water,  
Golden her wings and crest  
As she were Fionnuala, the King's daughter,  
Preening a golden breast.

The bog-pools now are fringed with golden lances,  
The bog-cotton's aflame ;  
Gold are the mountains that were purple as pansies,  
Since the wild heather came.

Oh, Heaven's o'er-arched with gold, that washing,  
flooding,

    Drenches, with golden rain  
The Dark Rose in her splendour, dreaming, brooding,  
    That she is crowned again.

## AFTER ASCENSION

THOSE twelve years from Ascension  
Until the day of meeting broke,  
She was not so much all alone  
As it might seem to common folk,  
Because no day passed without bliss :  
He gives Himself back to her kiss.

He comes no more in human guise,  
Yet He is in their midst again.  
His wounds are there in all men's eyes,  
So doubting Thomas sees them plain ;  
They pour the Wine and break the Bread,  
And the heart's hunger's comforted.

The Apostle takes the Cup of Wine,  
The white Bread on the paten bright,  
O Food of angels dear, divine !  
The Lord of Life comes down in light,  
And sweeter than the honeycomb  
Rests in the heart that was His home.

Give place ! His Mother's claim is first ;  
Her arms embrace her Son once more :  
On the kind breast where He was nurst  
He hath sweet ease as oft before.  
Morn after morn, through the twelve years,  
His love makes rapture of her tears.

She guards the youngling Church as once  
She kept her small Son while He grew,  
Safe sheltered from the winds and suns,  
Comforted with soft rain and dew ;  
Till it's full-grown and she is free  
For the long bliss that is to be.

## COLOURS

BLUES and greens are my delight  
Set in garlands of the white.

When God made the violet  
He made nothing better yet.

Lilac and the lavender  
Fit for queens of Heaven to wear.

Many russets and the rose,  
God be praised for these and those !

For the silvers and the greys  
Likewise ye shall give Him praise.

Scarlet is a King's colour  
That the King of Kings once wore.

Yet when everything is said,  
Bring me neither rose nor red.

Give me blue and green below,  
Apple bloom and cherry snow.

Blue forget-me-nots beneath  
Pear and plum-bloom in a wreath.

Or wild hyacinths in a glade—  
Nothing better God has made.

Blues and greens and a white bough  
Turn the earth to Heaven now.

## EPIPHANY

*(For Dora, 1918)*

SHE carried frankincense and gold  
When the Star guided her,  
And in her folded hands so cold  
She carried myrrh.

Frankincense for the praise she owed,  
Gold for her gift was meet,  
But myrrh because so oft her road  
Was bitter-sweet.

Lay her tired body in that earth  
Was holy to her mind !  
But the bird-soul flies in high mirth,  
Borne on the wind.

It tosses in the Irish skies  
Awhile, so small and white,  
Ere it is gone—swiftly it flies  
Into the light.



She has gone in with the Three Kings,  
In silk and miniver;  
The gold, the frankincense she brings,  
The sharp-sweet myrrh.

## THE IMAGE

WHEN a wild grace I see,  
A turn o' the neck, a curl, sweet hands, clear eyes,  
Gentleness, courtesy, dignity ;  
In all these gifts Thee I surmise, surprise.

All beauty and delight.  
Skin like a rose, a beauteous shape, an air  
Free and enchanting, give my weary sight  
Glimpses of Thee, Thou Beauty past compare.

Strength, courage also are Thine.  
And joy of youth and wings that cleave the blue,  
Low singing and soft voices, I divine  
In these Thy beauty ancient yet ever new.

Oh, when my startled eye  
Perceives this beauty league-long, sea and isle  
And eagle-crested mountains wild and high,  
I catch Thy Maker's thought—I see Thy smile.

Some mirror out of range

Flashes reflex of Heaven on this sweet earth,  
Brooding for ever, beautiful, without change,  
The blue-bell sea, the thousand streams' soft mirth.

All beauty is of Thee.

Kindness and quietness, moon and stars and sun,  
Gardens and woods, the bird in the new-fledged tree  
And sleep, O Kindest One!

## THE AERODROME

So now the aerodrome goes up  
Upon my father's fields,  
And gone is all the golden crop  
And all the pleasant yields.

They tear the trees up, branch and root,  
They kill the hedges green,  
As though some force, malign and brute,  
Ravaged the peace serene.

There where he used to sit and gaze  
With blue and quiet eyes,  
Watching his comely cattle graze,  
The walls begin to rise.

What place for robin or for wren,  
For thrush and blackbird's call ?  
Now there shall be but flying men  
Nor any bird at all.

'Twas well he did not stay to know,  
Defaced and all defiled  
The quiet fields of long ago,  
Dear to him as a child.

But when the tale was told to me  
I felt such piercing pain,  
They tore my heart up with the tree  
That will not leaf again.

## A SONG OF GOING

I would not like to live to be very old,  
To be stripped cold and bare  
Of all my leafage that was green and gold  
In the delicious air.

I would not choose to live to be left alone,  
The children gone away,  
And the true love that I have leant upon  
No more my staff and stay.

I would not live to stretch my shrivelled hands  
To an old fire died low,  
Minding me of the long-lost happy lands  
And children long ago.

Let me be gone while I am leafy yet  
And while my birds still sing,  
Lest leafless, birdless, my dull heart forget  
That ever it had Spring.

*LADDERS TO HEAVEN*





## GOOD FRIDAY, A.D. 33

MOTHER, why are people crowding now and staring ?

Child, it is a malefactor goes to His doom,  
To the high hill of Calvary He's faring,  
And the people pressing and pushing to make room  
Lest they miss the sight to come.

Oh, the poor malefactor, heavy is His load !

Now He falls beneath it and they goad Him on.  
Sure the road to Calvary's a steep up-hill road—  
Is there none to help Him with His Cross—not one ?  
Must He bear it all alone ?

Here is a country boy with business in the city,  
Smelling of the cattle's breath and the sweet hay ;  
Now they bid him lift the Cross, so they have some pity :  
Child, they fear the malefactor dies on the way  
And robs them of their play.

Has He no friends then, no father nor mother,  
None to wipe the sweat away nor pity His fate ?  
There's a woman weeping and there's none to soothe her :  
Child, it is well the seducer expiate  
His crimes that are so great.

Mother, did I dream He once bent above me,  
This poor seducer with the thorn-crowned head,  
His hands on my hair and His eyes seemed to love me ?  
Suffer little children to come to Me, He said—  
His hair, his brows drip red.

Hurrying through Jerusalem on business or pleasure  
People hardly pause to see Him go to His death  
Whom they held five days ago more than a King's treasure,  
Shouting Hosannas, flinging many a wreath  
For this Jesus of Nazareth.

## DISTRACTION

WHEN swarms of small distractions harry  
Devotion like the gnats that fly  
Till prayers are cold and customary,  
Not such as please Thee, Heaven-high.

When I forget for all my striving  
Thy presence holy and august,  
Be Thou not angry, but forgiving  
To her Thou madest from the dust.

Say to Thyself: This mortal being,  
So deaf, so blind, so prone to sin,  
Has glimpses of Me without seeing  
The places where the nails went in.

Say: Through the crusts of earth, My creature  
Perceives Me, hails Me Lord above;  
Rumours of the lost innocence reach her,  
With full assurance of My love.

Say : Of all marvels I have fashioned  
Is none more wonderful and new  
As that this thing should go impassioned  
For heights beyond her mortal view.

What though her mind should play and ponder  
On small things meet for such as she !  
O love ! O loyalty ! O wonder !  
That in the darkness gropes for Me.

## THE DESERTED

THOU Who wert kindest of the kind—  
Since out of sight is out of mind—  
There's none to do Thee kindnesses  
In Thy last anguish and distress.  
Thou art left all alone, alone.  
Where are Thy faithful lovers flown ?

Where is the multitude that fed,  
With loaves and fishes comfortèd ?  
The blind Thou mad'st to see ? the lame  
That walked ? the one leper who came  
Of nine made clean ? The dumb that spoke ?  
Where are they—all Thy loving folk ?

How is it they have naught to say ?  
Where's Lazarus risen from the clay ?  
Where is the widow of Nain ? where  
Jairus's daughter, small and fair ?  
Judas has sold Thee to Thy foes,  
And Peter weeps while the cock crows.

Simon will help Thee on Thy road  
Unwillingly—ah, Lamb of God !  
Thou bearest the world's weight up that hill,  
And none to help Thee with good will ;  
Stumbling and falling, while Thy hurt  
Makes for the rabble noble sport.

But yet there's balm in Gilead,  
For here's His Mother, sweet and sad,  
Here's Magdalen weeping, and with them  
The women of Jerusalem ;  
They have run all the way since one  
Brought them the news : He's not alone !

Veronica is nothing loth  
To wipe His poor face with her cloth.  
His Mother's by Him and St. John,  
With many a starry legion ;  
Magdalen's hair is round His feet,  
Her tears wash off the blood and sweat.

Thou Who wert kindest of the kind,  
Though out of sight be out of mind—

Thou art not forgot : by land and sea  
The broken hearts come home to Thee,  
And bear Thine anguish and Thy grief  
Till the Third Day shall bring relief.

## LENTEN COMMUNION

REST in a friend's house, Dear, I pray :  
The way is long to Good Friday,  
And very chill and grey the way.

No crocus with its shining cup,  
Nor the gold daffodil is up,—  
Nothing is here save the snowdrop.

Sit down with me and taste good cheer :  
Too soon, too soon, Thy Passion's here ;  
The wind is keen and the skies drear.

Sit by my fire and break my bread.  
Yea, from Thy dish may I be fed,  
And under Thy feet my hair spread !

Lord, in the quiet, chill and sweet,  
Let me pour water for Thy feet,  
While the crowd goes by in the street.



Why wouldst Thou dream of spear or sword,  
Or of the ingrate rabble, Lord ?  
There is no sound save the song of a bird.

Let us sit down and talk at ease  
About Thy Father's business.  
(What shouts were those borne on the breeze ?)

Nay, Lord, it cannot be for Thee  
They raise the tallest cross of the three  
On yon dark Mount of Calvary !

So soon, so soon, the hour's flown !  
The glory's dying : Thou art gone  
Out on Thy lonely way, alone.

## THE TEST

Love has moods : and I am cold,  
Very cold ofttimes to Thee ;  
Fain to slip from Thy dear hold  
To my follies and be free.

Yet I love : Thou knowest all.  
I am Thine in heat and chill ;  
Thou, Thou hast my heart in thrall,  
All my life and all my will.

Thou, Immortal Lover, sure  
Knowest the way that lovers have,  
Now so cold, afraid, unsure,  
Now afire with love and brave.

If I loved less it might be  
That the way was smother, less  
Of the heavenly joys for me  
And the cast-down bitterness.

I am cold—be that Love's proof!—  
And I burn—the proof again!—  
I would not be smooth but rough  
Lest the smoother love should wane.

Give me earth or Heaven—and yet  
If it is Love's test to swing  
'Twixt the earth and Heaven still set—  
I—I ask no other thing.

## NOËL

I HEARD a song upon Christmas day  
And the feet of many going one way,  
The word the golden voice did say :

*Gloria in Excelsis !*

The air was filled with snowflakes white,  
And the singing stars danced in their flight,  
Sweet the song they sang in the night,

*Et in terra pax !*

Good singing folk, where is there peace,  
And for the broken heart heartsease ?  
They chant : Come hither upon your knees,

*Venite ad Bethlehem !*

For now the Prince of Peace is born ;  
For the full heart and the heart forlorn  
He signs His Peace upon Christmas Morn :

*Adeste Fidelis !*





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